

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00 INRE-00

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O 021748Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5490

S E C R E T LISBON 0010

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 5 LAST TWO LINES)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AO

SUBJECT: CUBAN FLIGHTS TO ANGOLA

REF: (A) STATE 304898, (B) LISBON 7720, (C) LISBON 7584

1. SAW FOREIGN MINISTER MELO ANTUNES JANUARY 2 RE CUBAN FLIGHTS. MADE DEMARCHE DRAWING ON PARA TWO REFTEL (A).
2. ANTUNES REPLIED HE HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF SUCH CUBAN FLIGHTS. WERE WE CERTAIN? I GAVE HIM DATA ON FLIGHTS OF DEC 20, 21, 24 AND 27 (REFTEL B).
3. I NOTED THAT AMBASSADOR HAD ALREADY RAISED AZORES TRANSIT ISSUE WITH MEDEIROS FERREIRA ON DECEMBER 22 (REFTEL C). ANTUNES DID NOT DISPUTE THIS BUT SIMPLY REITERATED HIS LACK OF KNOWLEDGE.
4. MELO ANTUNES THEN SAID THAT, AS WE WERE BOTH AWARE, THERE WAS A LARGE DOMESTIC AMERICAN CONTROVERSY ABOUT ANGOLA. I AGREED. HE CONTINUED THAT THIS U.S. DOMESTIC CONTROVERSY WAS MAKING IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOP TO PURSUE ITS OWN ANGOLAN POLICY. THE U.S. CONGRESS, HE SAID, WAS APPARENTLY PLACING SERIOUS LIMITATIONS ON THE U.S. ROLE

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IN ANGOLA. MELO ANTUNES SAID HE PERSONALLY THOUGHT THE

PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE OF U.S. POLICY "WHICH WE IN PORTUGAL SHARE IN PART" WAS TO BLOCK SOVIET EXPANSION AND POSSIBLE SOVIET HEGEMONY IN ANGOLA. BUT THE CONTROVERSY IN U.S. WAS HARMING THAT OBJECTIVE.

5. ANTUNES SAID THAT WITHOUT OUTSIDE AID HE THOUGHT THAT UNITA/FLNA WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO HOLD OUT AGAINST A SOVIET AND CUBAN SUPPORTED MPLA. THAT BEING THE CASE, HE SAID, THE GOP MIGHT HAVE TO RECONSIDER ITS POLICY TOWARDS THE MPLA. THINKING OUT LOUD, HE DREW A SCENARIO IN WHICH THE MPLA WOULD EMERGE VICTORIOUS BECAUSE OF LACK OF SUPPORT FOR THE OTHER MOVEMENTS. MPLA WOULD THEN BE TOTALLY DEPENDENT UPON THE SOVIET UNION. WHERE WOULD THAT LEAVE US ALL HE WONDERED? MIGHT IT NOT BE BETTER IF PORTUGAL SOUGHT TO GAIN SOME INFLUENCE WITH THE MPLA? STILL THINKING OUT LOUD, MELO ANTUNES NOTED THAT THE ROLE OF THE OAU AND THE FORMER PORTUGUESE COLONIES WOULD ALSO HAVE AN AFFECT ON GOP POLICY TOWARDS ANGOLA.

6. I TOLD HIM THAT WE UNDERSTOOD PORTUGUESE PROBLEMS, BUT ON THE SPECIFIC QUESTION OF CUBAN TRANSIT THROUGH THE AZORES THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT THAT IT WAS NOT COMPARABLE TO ACTIVITIES OF THE WEST FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

-- EVEN TECHNICALLY, THE CUBANS WERE BREAKING IATA RULES BY NOT ANNOUNCING THEIR CARGO AND BY CLAIMING THESE WERE CIVILIAN FLIGHTS WHEN ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION THEY WERE CARRYING TROOPS AND WAR MATERIALS. FACT THAT PLANES RETURNED FROM GUINEA BISSAU EMPTY WAS PROOF OF THIS.

-- MOST IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WESTERN AND CUBAN FLIGHTS HOWEVER WAS CUBAN-SOVIET GOAL. HE KNEW THE GOAL OF THE USG WAS SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE GOP, I.E., RECOGNITION OF A NATIONAL MOVEMENT THAT REPRESENTED THE ANGOLAN PEOPLE'S WISHES. WHAT WE OPPOSED WAS OUTSIDE HEGEMONIAL ASPIRATIONS. THERE WAS A QUALITATIVE DIFFERENCE IN THIS. I SAID THAT, AS THE SECRETARY HAD NOTED PREVIOUSLY, THIS WAS NOT AN IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE FOR THE USG. WE HAD
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ACCEPTED A MARXIST GOVERNMENT IN MOZAMBIQUE WITHOUT DIFFICULTY. AT THIS POINT MELO ANTUNES INTERRUPTED ME TO SAY, "YES, INDEED YOU HAD." I ELABORATED ON THE NON-IDEOLOGICAL BASIS OF OUR CONCERN. HE AGREED WITH THAT AND ACCEPTED IT.

7. IN CLOSING, MELO ANTUNES REPEATED THAT THE WHOLE ANGOLA ISSUE WAS A VERY DIFFICULT PROBLEM FOR THE GOP.

HE HOPED WE UNDERSTOOD THIS, BUT THAT BASICALLY GOP SHARED OUR VIEWS TOWARD ANGOLA AND WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE "ESCALATION THERE." IN ANSWER TO MY LAST QUERY, HE SAID HE WOULD LOOK URGENTLY INTO THE MATTER OF THE CUBAN FLIGHTS AND TAKE MEASURES.

8. IN SEPARATE MEETING SAME DAY WITH SENATOR MCGOVERN, PRIME MINISTER PINHEIRO DE AZEVEDO (IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM THE SENATOR) SAID THAT GOP POLICY TOWARD ANGOLA WOULD BE DETERMINED BY WHAT THE USG DOES. HE TOO DREW ATTENTION TO U.S. CONGRESS'S RECENT ACTIONS ON ANGOLA. AZEVEDO AGREED WITH THE SENATOR THAT NEITHER SOVIET UNION NOR USG SHOULD BE INVOLVED DIRECTLY IN ANGOLA. P.M.'S PRESCRIPTION FOR USG POLICY WAS FOR USG TO ACT THROUGH FRIENDLY AFRICAN AND WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO INFLUENCE THE SITUATION IN ANGOLA TO ACHIEVE U.S. AND PORTUGUESE OBJECTIVES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LANDING RIGHTS, AZORES, MILITARY AIRLIFTS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: saccheem
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LISBON00010
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760002-0101
From: LISBON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760190/aaaadcbz.tel
Line Count: 133
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 STATE 304898, 75 LISBON 7720, 75 LISBON 7584
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: saccheem
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 APR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <31 AUG 2004 by saccheem>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CUBAN FLIGHTS TO ANGOLA
TAGS: PFOR, AO, US, PO, CU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006